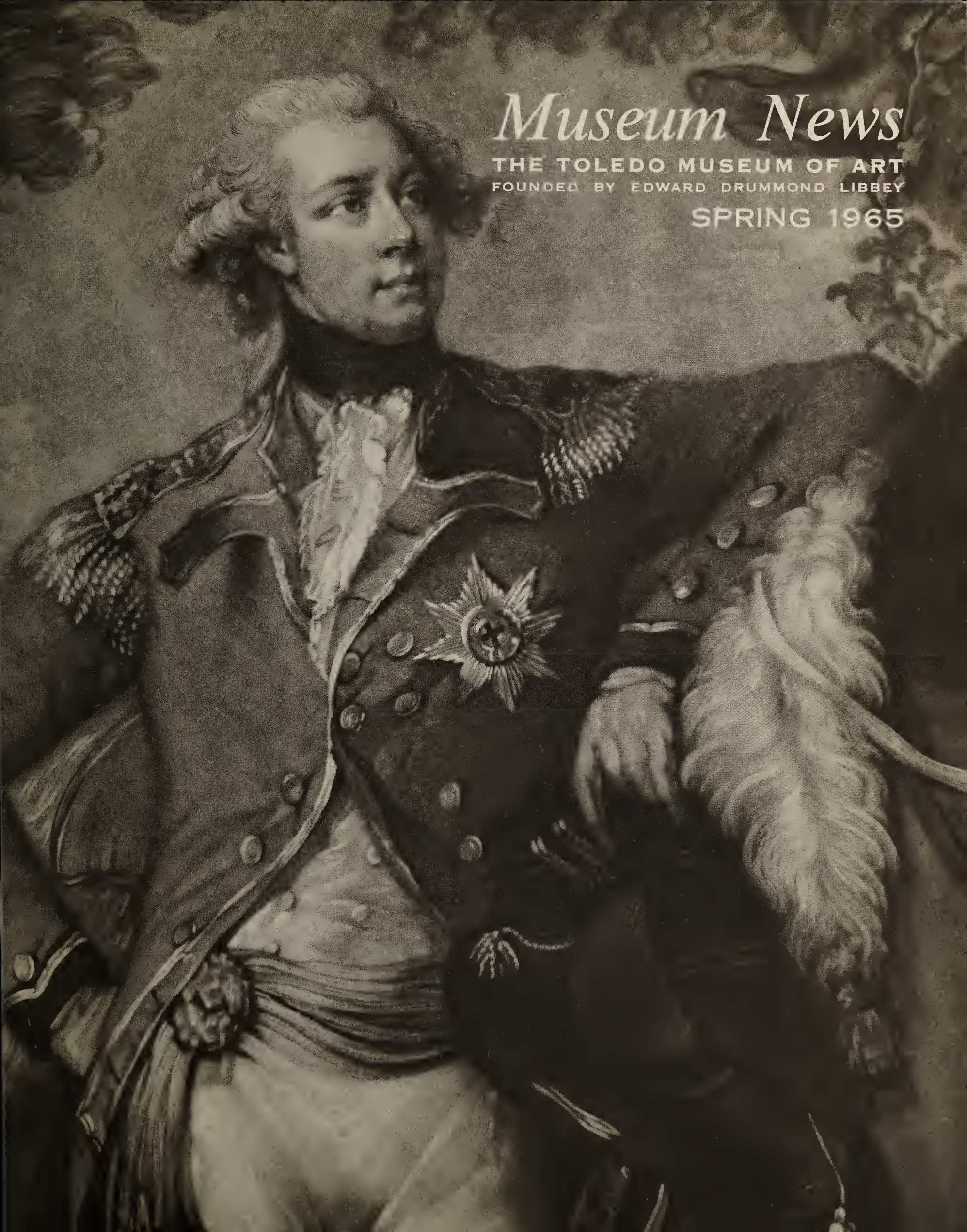
Museum News

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY
SPRING 1965



A COLLECTION OF MEZZOTINTS

Fine prints have always been valued as works of art by museums and private collectors. Tastes and interests, however, have varied over the centuries, and what is fashionable one day may not be on the next. The English mezzotint has had its share of enthusiatic admiration and disinterested neglect. Fortunately, mezzotints are once again enjoyed as superlative examples of the engraver's skill and interpretation.

Developed as a printmaking technique in the 18th century and practised chiefly by English artists, the mezzotint was primarily a method of reproducing copies in black ink on paper of elegant portraits done in oils on canvas. Mezzotinting is not practised to any extent today; indeed, since the early 19th century, other techniques were preferred for their less cumbersome methods of engraving or etching a copper plate. Today, the mezzotint is appreciated for its own virtues: skilled interpretation of the original painting, velvety textures of ink, and masterful use of the technique.

The greater part of the Museum's collection of English mezzotints was a gift of Mrs. Stevenson C. Scott, in memory of her husband. Mr. Scott (1864-1945) was president of the art firm of Scott and Fowles, New York, which he formed in 1898. The thirty-eight mezzotints, given in 1951-1952 by Mrs. Scott, were acquired by Mr. Scott for his personal collection, and were exhibited for years in his home. All of the mezzotints in this publication are from the Scott collection unless otherwise noted.

This superb group of mezzotints forms an important and rich section of the Museum's print collection. It contains many early or proof impressions, and all are of high quality.

Otto Wittmann, Director

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SPRING 1965 *New Series: Volume 8, Number 1*

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

COVER:- JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH (1752-1812).
His Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales (after Thomas Gainsborough). Detail.
25⅞ x 17⅞ inches. 1785. Smith 167, IV/X.
51.479

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS (1723-1792).
The Young Gardener. Oil on canvas.
50¼ x 39⅞ inches. 1788.
Gift of George W. and Mary F. Ritter. 55.31

CHARLES WILKIN (1750-1814).
Master Henry Hoare (after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
11⁷⁄₁₆ x 8⁷⁄₁₆. 1789. O'Donoghue 1.
Ex-collection: Amédée Faure, Paris.
Gift of Thomas Agnew and Sons, London. 55.37

ENGLISH MEZZOTINTS

Portraits of well-known English men and women of the 18th century found their way into the homes of the enlarging middle class in the form of mezzotint engravings. This process of reproduction made possible the multiplication of paintings by the great masters of portraiture for over a century prior to the invention of photography.

Prominent figures in the select circles of London society were accustomed to having grandiose portraits adorn the walls of their fashionable town or country houses, for any bit of cultural, political or social eminence was reason enough to immortalize onself on canvas. The translation of painted portraits into mezzotints made their subjects known to the increasingly interested public at modest prices. The great demand for mezzotints led to the rapid rise and prosperity of both the engraver and the publisher, whose functions were frequently assumed by the same person. The artists whose paintings were engraved and reproduced profited as well; Sir Joshua Reynolds realized the value of the copy and sale of these prints when he said of contemporary mezzotint engravers: "By these men I shall be immortalized."

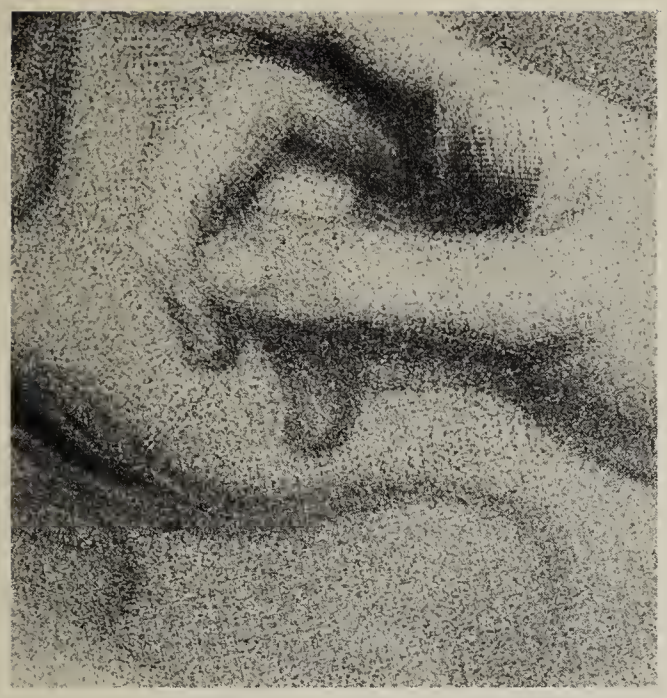
In the Museum's collection is Sir Joshua Reynolds' painting of *The Young Gardener*, a portrait of Master Henry Hoare, and its engraved counterpart

by Charles Wilkin. A comparison of these two works illustrates the exactness of reproduction achieved through this process. While the painting itself was enjoyed by few besides its owners, the print reached a far wider public through its engraved version by Wilkin.

Mezzotint engraving is basically a negative process in which the engraver works from darks to the lighter tones. The copper plate is first roughened over its entire surface; this "grounding" of the plate is done with a *rocker* whose curved, serrated edge of cutting teeth produces the countless minute indentations, each with a raised edge, or burr, when rocked regularly over the surface of the plate at several prescribed angles. On the fully grounded plate a regular grain is thereby achieved which, if inked and printed at that point, would produce a uniformly rich, velvet black impression. With properly scaled drawings of his subject, the engraver then begins to reduce this absolute blackness by removing, or scraping away, the burr with a *scraper*. The more burr the scraper removes, the less ink will be retained by that which remains. This process can be carried to the point where the burr is removed altogether; no ink will therefore be retained in these areas and pure white will result when printed. These highlights are polished to absolute smoothness with the third basic tool, the *burnisher*. The enlarged detail of a mezzotint illustrated here emphasizes the careful manipulation of the plate's surface necessary not only to define form but also to describe the play of light upon the object and the movement of space around it.

Because the quality of a mezzotint depends on the delicate burr, only a limited number of rich impressions can be obtained from any one plate. These early impressions, called proofs, are the most desirable from the collector's standpoint. Successively numbered states, or reworkings of some area upon the plate (either in the picture itself or, more often, in the inscribed area beneath it) chronologically record its history and provide the collector with a means of determining the place of a certain impression amid all known versions, or states, derived from a single plate. Once the freshness of the plate's original scraping is lost, its richness diminishes increasingly with subsequent printings. Skillful artists can prolong the life of a plate by carefully reworking certain areas. At times whole sections of the plate are reground and newly scraped; positions, details, and even identity of the subject may be changed. John Raphael Smith's mezzotint of the young and dashing George IV was later reissued showing the same figure older and more heavily set. The two versions were for a long time considered to be a product of two separate plates instead of one which underwent drastic alteration.

The early history of the mezzotint process is shrouded with a certain mystery. Ludwig von Siegen (1609- after 1676) is credited with its invention and is responsible for the earliest dated mezzotint, a portrait of Amelia Elizabeth of Bohemia. In a letter dated 1642 which accompanied the delivery of the print, von Siegen claimed the invention as his own and described the new process essentially as one that employs the use of dots instead of lines.



JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH (1752-1812).
A Bacchante (after Sir Joshua Reynolds). Detail.
1784. Smith 75, III/IV.
51.482

PRINCE RUPERT (1619-1682).
Head of the Executioner (after Ribera).
Plate from John Evelyn's *Sculptura,* 1662.
5¼ x 6⅜ inches. ca. 1662. Smith 7.
Museum purchase. 23.3202

Responsible for transporting knowledge of the craft from the Continent to the country where it was destined to be most successful was Prince Rupert (1619-1682), one of the first professionals of the art. He was the son of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of James I of England, and Frederick V, King of Bohemia. A year after his birth he and his family were driven from Bohemia and finally took refuge in Holland. According to tradition he learned the art from von Siegen in 1654, probably in Germany, and introduced it to England when he settled there in 1660.

The first mention of mezzotint in print was made by the famous diarist John Evelyn, who wrote *History, and Art of Chalcography and Engraving in Copper,* published in 1662. It is clear that he preferred to leave his public bewildered concerning the real nature of the newly discovered art; he "did not think it necessary that an Art so curious and (as yet) so little vulgar . . . was to be prostituted at so cheap a rate as the mere naked describing of it here would too soon have expos'd it to." He chose, therefore, to leave it "aenigmatical," but included in his volume a small mezzotint, *Head of the Executioner,* by Prince Rupert, to attest to the extraordinary qualities made possible by this new art. While 17th century exponents of the art were found in Holland, France, Germany, and Austria as well as in England, by the following century it became known as *la manière anglaise.* It developed in England as an almost indigenous art and during the greatest period of the mezzotint, between 1745 and the reign of George IV, the best mezzotint engravers of all countries were attracted to London, its social and cultural center.

A group of Irish mezzotinters, including Edward Fisher and James Watson, were the first to establish themselves in England during this great era of mezzotint engraving. These and other masters of the art represented in the

Museum's collection precede those who are now considered the "classical" English mezzotinters. These artists, largely devoted to the reproduction of Reynolds' paintings, were active from about 1770 through the first decade of the 19th century. One of the most noted was Valentine Green, who abandoned his study of law for the mezzotinter's craft. His fame rests largely on a series of full length portraits engraved after paintings in the "grand manner" by Sir Joshua Reynolds. *Isabella, Duchess of Rutland* and *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* are among the most outstanding of the series.

The mezzotint engraver and artist, John Raphael Smith, is perhaps the most representative of all the classical mezzotinters. Son of the landscape painter, Thomas Smith of Derby, he came to London at an early age and soon entered upon a career in the art. Smith's uniqueness is partially accounted for by his dual talent as both painter and engraver. *Les Deux Ami* is an example of a translation of his own painting into mezzotint, but more usually he engraved after Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Peters. The 1780's found him at the peak of his powers, having fully mastered the technical aspects of the art and having developed an individual handling of subject matter. Two masterpieces of these years are *Lt. Col. Tarleton* after Reynolds, and *George, Prince of Wales* after Gainsborough.

The early part of the 19th century saw the rise of equally distinguished mezzotinters: Charles Turner, author of the ambitious *Marlborough Family;* Samuel William Reynolds, whose excellence is often compared to the earlier work of J. R. Smith; and Samuel Cousins, whose engraving was favored by the Royal Academy's President, Sir Thomas Lawrence. These mezzotinters demonstrate the tendency of this later period to supplement pure mezzotint with light etching, drypoint, stipple, or aquatint to achieve an added force in their images. This combination of techniques, called the "mixed manner" accompanied the gradual deterioration of quality in mezzotint engraving after 1810. This great period in English painting and engraving was made possible by the concurrence of a flourishing vogue for the painted portrait, superb masters of grand portraiture, and a group of mezzotint engravers talented and enterprising enough to answer the demands of their public.

Margo L. Pautler

EDWARD FISHER (1722-1785).
Lady Sarah Bunbury Sacrificing to the Three Graces
(after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
23⅜ x 14½ inches. 1766. Smith 6, II/II.
Ex-collection: Royal Library, Windsor.
52.6

HENRY MEYER (? -1847).
Lt. Gen. the Hon. Charles William Stewart (after Sir Thomas Lawrence).
$20\frac{1}{16}$ x $13\frac{15}{16}$ inches. 1814. O'Donoghue 2.
51.477

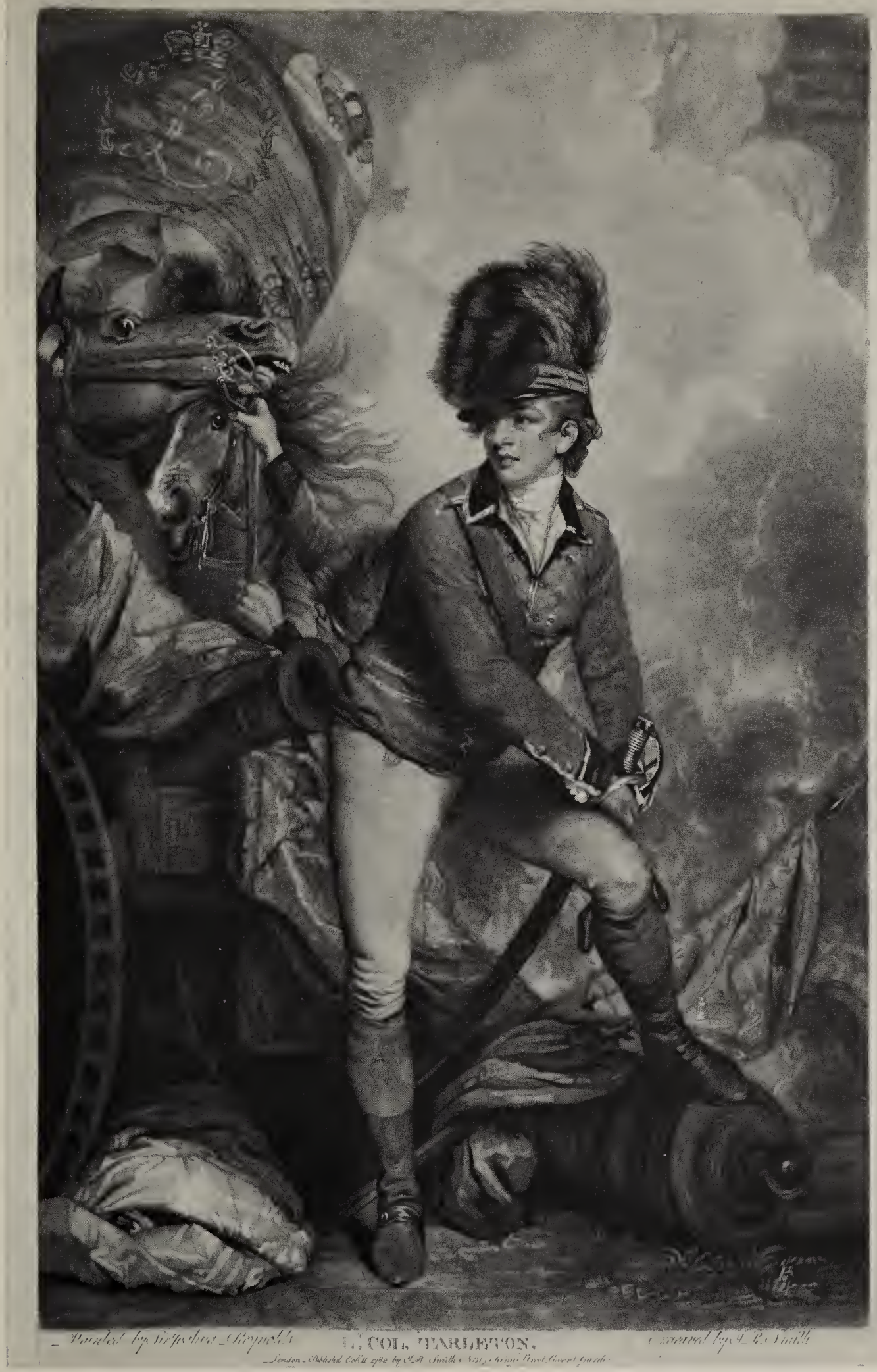
WILLIAM WHISTON BARNEY (active 1775-1810).
Marquis of Blandford (after Richard Cosway).
$14\frac{3}{16}$ x $10\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Smith 3, I/III.
52.2

VALENTINE GREEN (1739-1813).
Countess of Aylesford (after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
18 x $12\frac{15}{16}$ inches. 1783. Whitman 120, III/IV.
52.7

Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Engraved by J. Green, Mezzotinto Engraver to his Majesty & the Elector Palatine.

Published Jan.ry 1st 1783, by J. Green, N.o 21, Newman Street, Oxford Street.

JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH (1752-1812).
His Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales
(after Thomas Gainsborough).
25⅞ x 17⅞ inches. 1785. Smith 167, IV/X.
51.479



JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH (1752-1812).
Lt. Col. Tarleton (after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
25⅛ x 15⁷⁄₁₆ inches. 1782. Smith 161, V/V.
51.484

THOMAS WATSON (ca. 1748-1781).
Henry, Lord Apsley and His Brother
(after Nathaniel Dance).
19⅞ x 14 inches. 1776. Goodwin 28, I/III.
51.493

JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH (1752-1812).
Lady Catherine Pelham-Clinton
(after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
19⅞ x 13⅞ inches. 1782. Smith 43, II/IV.
51.483

JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH (1752-1812).
Les Deux Ami, or, The Two Friends
(after John Raphael Smith).
10½ x 8 inches. 1778. Frankau 323, II/III.
51.487

WILLIAM SAY (1768-1834).
Lady Mildmay and Child (after John Hoppner).
25⅜ x 16½ inches. 1803. O'Donoghue 1.
51.478

SAMUEL WILLIAM REYNOLDS (1773-1835).
The Falconer (after James Northcote).
19¾ x 13$^{13}/_{16}$ inches. 1797. Whitman 414, II/III
Museum purchase. 43.47

ROBERT DUNKARTON (1744-1811/17).
Mrs. Billington (after John Downman).
11½ x 8⅞ inches. 1786. Smith 8, II/IV.
52.5

JOHN JONES (ca. 1745-1797).
Mrs. Edwards (after William Lawranson).
14 13/16 x 10⅞ inches. 1780. Smith 24, I/II.
51.474

LAVINIA COUNTESS SPENCER.

CHARLES TURNER (1773-1857).
Lavinia, Countess Spencer
(after Sir Martin Archer Shee).
13 15/16 x 9 15/16 inches. 1804. Whitman 538, II/II.
51.490

VALENTINE GREEN (1739-1813).
Isabella, Duchess of Rutland (after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
25$\frac{1}{16}$ x 15$\frac{1}{4}$ inches. 1780. Smith 115, II/IV.
51.473

VALENTINE GREEN (1739-1813).
Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
24$\frac{7}{8}$ x 15$\frac{3}{16}$ inches. 1780. Whitman 102, II/II.
52.8

Sr. Joshua Reynolds Pinxt.
Mrs. ABINGTON.
Elizt. Judkins Fecit.
Printed and Published according to Act of Parliament 1st April 1776. by J. Bretherton, Nº 134. New Bond Street.

ELIZABETH JUDKINS (active ca. 1772-1775).
Mrs. Abington (after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
15 x 10⅞ inches. 1776. Goodwin III/III (?).
51.476

JOHN YOUNG (1755-1825).
Lady Ann Lambton and Family
(after John Hoppner).
24½ x 18 13/16 inches. 1799. Smith 46.
51.497

JAMES WATSON (ca. 1740-1790).
Caroline, Duchess of Marlborough with her Daughter
(after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
17 15/16 x 13 15/16 inches. 1768.
Goodwin 56, I/II. 51.495

CHARLES TURNER (1773-1857).
George, Fourth Duke of Marlborough and His Family
(after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
33 x 26½ inches. 1815. Whitman 352, I/II.
51.489

JUVENILE RETIREMENT

JAMES WARD (1769-1859).
Juvenile Retirement (after John Hoppner).
22 x 18 inches. 1799. Smith 14, II/IV.
51.491

SAMUEL COUSINS (1801-1887).
Master Lambton (after Sir Thomas Lawrence).
18$\frac{9}{16}$ x 14$\frac{1}{4}$ inches. 1827. Whitman 98, IV/IX.
52.4

SAMUEL COUSINS (1801-1887).
The Countess Gower and the Lady Elizabeth Leveson Gower
(after Sir Thomas Lawrence).
29¼ x 17⅞ inches. 1832. Whitman 71, V/VII.
52.3

JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH (1752-1812).
Miss Cumberland (after George Romney).
$14^{15}/_{16}$ x $10^{7}/_{8}$ inches. 1779. Frankau 102, III/IV
51.485

THOMAS WATSON (ca. 1748-1781).
Mrs. Hardinge (after Sir Joshua Reynolds).
$17^{5}/_{8}$ x $12^{3}/_{4}$ inches. 1780. Smith 18, III/IV.
51.496

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Alfred Whitman, *Valentine Green,* London, 1902.
Alfred Whitman, *Samuel William Reynolds,* London, 1903.
Alfred Whitman, *Charles Turner,* London, 1907.

MEZZOTINTS IN THE STEVENSON SCOTT COLLECTION NOT ILLUSTRATED:

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Samuel Cousins, *Mrs. Lister* (after Newton), 1834, Whitman 102, V/VI. 51.468
Samuel Cousins, *Mrs. Wolff* (after Lawrence), 1831, Whitman 178, IV/VIII. 51.469
John Dean, *Boy with Sheep* (after Reynolds), 1776, Smith 23, I/II. 51.470
John Dean, *Child with Basket* (after Reynolds), 1786. 51.471
Richard Earlom, *Cottage Girl with Pigs* (after Gainsborough), 1783. 51.472
John Jones, *Emma* (after Romney), 1785, O'Donoghue 31. 51.475
John Raphael Smith, *Love in Her Eye Sits Playing* (after Peters), 1778, Smith 187, II/II. 51.480
John Raphael Smith, *Sylvia* (after Peters), 1778, Frankau 342. 51.481
John Raphael Smith, *Bagnigge Wells* (after Sanders), 1772, Frankau 20. 51.486
John Spilsbury, *Mrs. Richards* (after Gainsborough), 1768, Smith 35, II/III. 51.488
William Ward, *The Soldier's Return* (after Wheatley), 1787, Frankau 270. 51.492.
Thomas Watson, *Philemon and Baucis Entertaining Jupiter and Mercury* (after Rembrandt), 1772, Whitman 50, II/III. 51.494

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